THE WAGGONER

and other poems by

Edmund Blunden

JOHN CLARE

Poems chiefly from MSS.

selected and edited with

a biographical note by

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and

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THE SHEPHERD

AND OTHER POEMS OF PEACE AND WAR

BY EDMUND BLUNDEN

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11*th* *R.S.R.*

How bright a dove's wing shows against the sky
When thunder's blackening up in monstrous cloud,
How silver clear against war's hue and cry
Each syllable of peace the gods allowed!
Even common things in anguish have grown rare
As legends of a richer life gone by,
Like flowers that in their time are no one's care,
But blooming late are loved and grudged to die

What mercy is it, that I live and move,
If haunted ever by war's agony?
Nature is love and will remember love,
And kindly uses those whom fear set free,
Let me not even think of you as dead,
O never dead! you live, your old songs yet
Pass me each day, your faith still routs my dread,
Your past and future are my parapet

You looked before and after! these calm shires
And doting sun and orchards all aflame,
These joyful flocking swallows round the spires,
Bonfires and turreted stacks—well may you claim,
Still seeing these sweet familiar bygones, all!
Still dwells in you their has-been, their to-be,
And walking in their light you fear no fall.
This is your holding mine, across the sea,

Where much I find to trace old friendship by
'Here one bade us farewell,' 'Here supped we then,'
'Wit never sweeter fell than that July'—
Even sometimes comes the praise of better men
The land lies like a jewel in the mind,
And featured sharp shall lie when other fades,
And through its veins the eternal memories wind
As that lost column down its colonnades.

Flat parcelled fields the scanty paths scored through,
Woods where no guns thrust their lean muzzles out,
Small smoky inns, we laughed at war's ado!
And clutching death, to hear, fell into doubt
Christ at each crossroad hung, rich belfries tolling,
Old folks a-digging, weathercocks turned torches,
Half-hearted railways, flimsy millsails rolling—
Not one, but by the host for ever marches

Shepherd

Evening has brought the glow-worm to the green,
And early stars to heaven, and joy to men,
The sun is gone, the shepherd leaves the pen
And hobbles home, while we for leisure lean
On garden pales O shepherd old and kind,
Sweet may your musings and your slumbers prove!—
Where the rude chairs, of untanned osiers wove,
Creak to the dead of night, his rest he'll find.

And at his feet well pleased his dog will doze,
And not a traveller passes but he knows

A country god to every childish eye—
Who sees the shepherd save when he comes home,
With untrimmed staff, smock stitched like honeycomb,
With great-tongued boots, and buskins to the thigh ?
A seer, a country god—so thought conceives
His oracles of seasons foul or fair,
His weather-bitten looks and wild white hair
That on his shoulders thatches like an eaves
And he himself, proud of his antique toil,
Gossips with none that might such honour soil

Sleep comes upon the village, the rich bee
From honeyed bells of balsams high is gone,
The windows palely shine, the owls whoop on,
But bats have slunk into their hollow tree
The shepherd hours before has closed his eyes,
But he unseen will take his staff in hand
And walk to wake the morning through the land
Before the cockerel knows 'tis time to rise
High on the hill he dares the mist and dew
And sings before a sunbeam ventures through.

Now when the morning ripens and unfolds
Like beds of flowers the glories of the plain,
His heart leaps up at every steeple vane
And barn and kiln and windmill on the wolds,
For boyhood knew them all, and not a brook

But he has bathed and played the miller there,
By every green he's hurried to the fair
And tended sheep in every whitethorn nook
Thus dreaming does he huddle up the pen
And thinks how soon comes clipping-time agen.

His sheep his children are, each one he knows,
And well might know, who lay through winter storm
In cramping hulks with bracken scarce kept warm
While each one came from the poor frightened yoes.
He never bids or wants for holiday,
His sheep his children are and his delight
That shepherds'-harvest makes the May so bright
When round his feet the lambs so frisk and play
And nuzzle in his sleeve and twitch his hand—
The prettiest dears, he calls them, in the land

But May when music grows on every tree
Too quickly passes, shepherd's-roses die—
New dipt and shorn, they still delight the eye
How fast they gather to his "Cub-burree"!
Even crows and jackdaws scrambling for the beans
Among their troughs are of his rustic clan
And know him king of bird and sheep and man,
And where he breaks his bread the emmet gleans.
The great sun gives him wisdom, the wind sings
Clear to his simple heart the hardest things

The stubble browsing comes, and grand and grave
Autumn in shadow swathes the rolling weald,
The blue smoke curls with mocking stealth afield,

And far-off lights, like wild eyes in a cave,
Stare at the shepherd on the bleaching grounds
Deeply he broods on the dark tide of change,
And starts when echo sharp and sly and strange
To his gap-stopping from the sear wood sounds.
His very sheep-bells seem to bode him ill
And starling whirlwinds strike his bosom chill.

Then whispering all his eighty years draw nigh,
And mutter like an Advent wind, and grieve
At perished summer, bid him take his leave
Of toil and take some comfort ere he die
The hounded leaf has found a tongue to warn
How fierce the fang of winter, the lead rain
Brings him old pictures of the drowning plain,
When even his dog sulks loath to face the morn.
The sun drops cold in a watery cloud, the briars
Like starved arms still snatch at his withered fires.

But shepherd goes to warm him in his chair,
And in the blaze his dog growls at his dreams,
And on the hearth the leaping firelight gleams
That makes him think of one with ruddy hair
Who kept the sheep in ancient Bethlehem
With trusting tears he takes his Bible, reads
Once more of still green banks and glittering meads
Where storms are not, nor ever floods to stem ,
Where the kind shepherd never takes them wrong,
And gently leads the yoes that are with young

Forefathers

Here they went with smock and crook,
 Toiled in the sun, lolled in the shade,
Here they mudded out the brook
 And here their hatchet cleared the glade:
Harvest-supper woke their wit,
Huntsman's moon their woomgs lit

From this church they led their brides,
 From this church themselves were led
Shoulder-high, on these waysides
 Sat to take their beer and bread
Names are gone—what men they were
These their cottages declare

Names are vanished, save the few
 In the old brown Bible scrawled,
These were men of pith and thew,
 Whom the city never called,
Scarce could read or hold a quill,
Built the barn, the forge, the mill.

On the green they watched their sons
 Playing till too dark to see,
As their fathers watched them once
 As my father once watched me,
While the bat and beetle flew
On the warm air webbed with dew.

Unrecorded, unrenowned,
Men from whom my ways begin,
Here I know you by your ground
But I know you not within—
All is mist, and there survives
Not a moment of your lives.

Like the bee that now is blown
Honey-heavy on my hand,
From the toppling tansy-throne
In the green tempestuous land,—
I'm in clover now, nor know
Who made honey long ago.

The Idlers

The gipsies lit their fires by the chalk-pit gate anew,
And the hoppled horses supped in the further dusk and dew,
The gnats flocked round the smoke like idlers as they were
And through the goss and bushes the owls began to churr.

An ell above the woods the last of sunset glowed
With a dusky gold that filled the pond beside the road;
The cricketers had done, the leas all silent lay,
And the carrier's clattering wheels went past and died away.

The gipsies lolled and gossiped, and ate their stolen swedes,
Made merry with mouth-organs, worked toys with
piths of reeds
The old wives puffed their pipes, nigh as black as their
hair,
And not one of them all seemed to know the name of
care.

The March Bee

A WARNING wind comes to my resting-place
And in a mountain cloud the lost sun chills,
Night comes, and yet before she shows her face
The sun flings off the shadows, warm light fills
The valley and the clearings on the hills
Bleak crow the moorcocks on the fen's blue plashes,
But here I warm myself with these bright looks and
flashes.

And like to me the merry humble-bee
Puts fear aside, runs forth to meet the sun,
And by the ploughland's shoulder comes to see
The flowers that like him best, and seems to shun
Cold countless quaking windflowers every one,
Primroses too, but makes poor grass his choice
Where small wood-strawberry blossoms nestle and rejoice

The magpies steering round from wood to wood,
Tree-creeper flickering up the elm's green rind,
Bold gnats that revel round my solitude
And most this pleasant bee intent to find
The new-born joy, inveigle the rich mind

Long after darkness comes cold-lipped to one
Still hearkening to the bee, still basking in the sun.

Gleaning

Along the baulk the grasses drenched in dews
Soak through the morning gleaner's clumsy shoes,
And cloying cobwebs trammel their brown cheeks
While from the shouldering sun the dewfog reeks
Now soon begun, on ground where yesterday
The rakers' warning-sheaf forbade their way,
Hard clucking dames in great white hoods make haste
To cram their lapbags with the barley waste,
Scrambling as if a thousand were but one,
Careless of stabbing thistles Now the sun
Gulps up the dew and dries the stubs, and scores
Of tiny people trundle out of doors
Among the stiff stalks, where the scratched hands ply—
Red ants and blackamoors and such as fly,
Tunbellied, too, with legs a finger long,
The spider harvestman, the churlish strong
Black scorpion, prickled earwig, and that mite
Who shuts up like a leaden shot in fright
And lies for dead And still before the rout
The young rats and the fieldmice whisk about
And from the trod whisp out the leveret darts,
Bawled at by boys that pass with blundering carts
Top-heavy to the red-tiled barns —And still
The children feed their corn sacks with good will,
And farmwives ever faster stoop and flounce.

The hawk drops down a plummet's speed to pounce
The nibbling mouse or resting lark away,
The lost mole tries to pierce the mattocked clay
In agony and terror of the sun

The dinner hour and its grudged leisure won,
All sit below the pollards on the dykes
Rasped with the twinge of creeping barley spikes
Sweet beyond telling now the small beer goes
From the hooped hardwood bottles, the wasp knows,
And even hornets whizz from the eaten ash ,
Then crusts are dropt and switches snatched to slash,
While safe in shadow of the apron thrown
Aside the bush which years before was grown
To snap the poacher's nets, the baby sleeps
Now toil returns, in red-hot fluttering light
And far afield the weary rabble creeps,
Oft happening blind wheat, black among the white,
That smutches where it touches quick as soot ,—
Oft gaping where the landrail seems afoot,
Who with such magic throws his baffling speech
Far off he sounds when scarce beyond arm's reach
The dogs are left to mind the morning's gain,
But squinting knaves can slouch to steal the grain.
Close to the farm the fields are gleaned agen,
Where the boy droves the turkey and white hen
To pick the shelled sweet corn, their hue and cry
Answers the gleaners' gabble , and sows trudge by
With little pigs to play and rootle there,
And all the fields are full of din and blare.

So steals the time past, so they glean and gloat;
The hobby-horse whirs round, the moth's dust coat
Blends with the stubble, scarlet soldiers fly
In airy pleasure, but the gleaners' eye
Sees little but their spoils, or robin-flower
Ever on tenterhooks to shun the shower,
Their weather-prophet never known astray,
When he folds up, then towards the hedge glean they
But now the dragon of the skies droops, pales,
And wandering in the wet grey western vales
Stumbles, and passes, and the gleaning's done.
The farmer with fat hares slung on his gun
Gives folks goodnight, as down the ruts they pull
The creaking two-wheeled handcarts bursting full,
And whimpering children cease their teazing squawls
While left alone the supping partridge calls—
Till all at home is stacked from mischief's way,
To thrash and dress the first wild windy day,
And each good wife crowns weariness with pride,
With such small riches more than satisfied

The Pasture Pond

By the pasture pond alone
I'll call the landscape all my own,
Be the lord of all I see
From water fly to topmost tree,
And on these riches gloat this day
Till the blue mist warns away

Here's no malice that could wither
Joy's blown flower, nor dare come hither,
No hot hurry such as drives
Men through their unsolaced lives,
Here like bees I cannot fare
A span but find some honey there

The small birds and great as well
In these trees and closes dwell,
And there they never grudge nor brawl
For nature gives enough for all,
Crows don't care what starling delves
Among the mole-heaps like themselves

You thrush that haunt the mellow ground
And run with those quick glances round,
You'll run and revel through my brain
For a blue moon befooling pain,
And elms so full of birds and song
There shall be green the winter long

From the meadows smooth and still,
Where the peewits feed their fill
And into swirling rings upfly
With white breasts dazzling on the eye,
To the pool itself I come
And like rapture am struck dumb ·

For if fields and air are free
The water's double liberty,
Where milch cows dewlap-deep may wade
Or hernshaw ply his angling trade—
Else what but vision dares intrude
That many-peopled solitude ?

The astonished clouds seem lingering here
For dragon-flies so whip and veer
And take the sun and turn to flame,
They'd make the fastest cloud seem lame,
Or breaths of wind that sometimes fly
And cut faint furrows and are by

So well may I admire the pool
Where thistles with their caps of wool
(Whence those sly winds some flecks purloin)
Stand sentinels at every coign,
And sorrels rusty-red have banned
Each place the thistles left unmanned

But passing through, an old ally,
Into the bright deeps I may spy,
Where merry younkers, roach or rudd,
Jump for the fly and flounce and scud ,
That care for no one now, and live
For every pleasure pools can give

In russet weeds, by the sunken boat,
That grudge each other room to float,

They hide along, grown fine and fat,
I hear them like a lapping cat
Feed from the stems till hunger's done—
Then out agen to find the sun

The moorhen, too, as proud as they,
With jerking neck is making way
In horse-shoe creeks where old pike rest
And beetles skate in jostling jest,
And overhead as large as wrens
Dance hobby-horses of the fens—

From all these happy folk I find
Life's radiance kindle in my mind,
And even when homeward last I turn
How bright the hawthorn berries burn,
How steady in the old elm still
The great woodpecker strikes his bill,

Whose labour oft in vain is given,
Yet never he upbraids high heaven,
Such trust is his O I have heard
No sweeter from a singing bird
Than his tap-tapping there this day,
That said what words will never say

The bells from humble steeples call,
Nor will I be the last of all

To pass between the ringers strong
And as of old make evensong,
While over pond and plat and hall
The first of sleep begins to fall

Time, like an ever-rolling stream!
Through the yew the sun's last gleam
Lights into a glory extreme
The squirrel-carven pews that dream
Of my fathers far beyond
Their solitary pasture-pond

November Morning

From the night storm sad wakes the winter day
With sobbings round the yew, and far-off surge
Of broadcast rain, the old house cries dismay,
And rising floods gleam silver on the verge
Of sackclothed skies and melancholy grounds.
On the black hop-pole slats the weazen bine,
The rooks with terror's tumult take their rounds,
Under the eaves the chattering sparrows pine

Waked by the bald light from his bed of straw,
The beggar shudders out to steal and gnaw
Sheeps' locusts leaves the last of many homes—
Where mouldered apples and black shoddy lie,
Hop-shovels spluttered, wickered flasks flung by,
And sharded pots and rusty curry combs.

The Dried Millpond

Old Broadbridge Pond, once on a time so deep,
And full of water-lilies as could be,
Is mudded now, in dull and deathly sleep,
A gaping slough, a piteous thing to see

Hoarse brawling through some deep-wormed channels
run
Small streams dull as dead serpents in the sun,
Roots writhed and sloven mottle everywhere
And even the mid pool has no secret lair,
And what seemed dangers' very gateways lie
Grey quagmire where the greedy moorhens ply

Not even eels could bear to come agen
Poor roach and perch have perished, whose swift sides
Made beautiful the bright green kingdom then,
Nor any pleasure of the past abides

Spring Night

Through the smothered air the wicker finds
A muttering voice, "crick" cries the embered ash,
Sharp rains knap at the panes beyond the blinds,
The flues and eaves moan, the jarred windows clash,
And like a sea breaking its barriers, flooding
New green abysses with untold uproar,

The cataract nightwind whelms the time of budding,
Swooping in sightless fury off the moor
Into our valley Not a star shines Who
Would guess the martin and the cuckoo come,
The pear in bloom, the bloom gone from the plum,
The cowslips countless as a morning dew?
So mad it blows, so truceless and so grim,
As if day's host of flowers were a moment's whim.

The May Day Garland

THOUGH folks no more go Maying
Upon the dancing-green
With ale and cakes and music loud
To crown the fairest queen,
Yet little ones to each gate go
Before the clock tells noon,
And there the prettiest garlands show
That e'er Love smiled upon

Their garlands are of peagles
That flaunt their yellow heads
By dykesides where the pigeon broods
And the nuzzling hedgehog beds—
Their ladysmocks shall nod in the sun
And kingcups scent like mead,
And blue bell's misty flame be spun
With daisies' glittering brede.

And one will make her garland
A crown for such a day,
And one a harp, and one a heart
(Lest heis be stolen away);
Cart-wheels never meant to turn
And chip-hats never worn
And petal-tambourines shall earn
A largess this May morn

And for these little children
And my love like a child,
The May should never fade to-night
Could Time but be beguiled,
Could Time but see the beauty of
These singing honied hours,
And lie in the sun adream while we
Hid up his scythe in flowers!

Journey

Along the relic of an ancient ride
Where all the summer's weeds, an upstart race,
The thoroughfare of centuries denied,
We took our way, nor wished a better place.

There gilded flies and bees buzzed sweet content,
The path became a glade, a thousand ways
About the hills and holes the brambles went,
With first dewberries blue as thunder haze

Red rosy flowers a thicket swarmed beyond
Where long ago the faint brook's dropples died,
And, not to drown us in their blossomed pond,
Into the pasture's gap we turned aside.

Stern on their knolls the patriarch thistles stood,
Nid-nodding in assembly passing wise,
While often urchin winds in antic rude
Plucked their white beards, puffed them to sink or rise

Like tufts stolen from the clouds whose concourse slow
Darkened awhile or lightened travelling on,
The darkest turning whiter than new snow
As through the clifts the sun a moment shone

A nameless track, a rabble of outcast weeds,
And knots of thistle-wool in clownish chase,
What fare were these to furnish pleasure's needs ?
We laughed at time, nor wished a better place.

High Summer

Now all the birds are flown, the first, the second
brood,
Save those poor nestlings prisoned in cages for good,
The year seems to droop with its own midsummer might:
Tarnishing mosses crowd even runnels out of sight

The ponds so wasted down scarce give their tenants
breath,
Who plunge their heads to the ooze, and sicken to their
death
Unless the clouds come on—already their dead float
Gleamless among the brambles that hide the moorhen's
boat

Slow walks the farmer's cob with ever-switching tail
Where the white dust-track glares, and labour dips
his pail
But slow where the sand-vein still bubbles its clear
spring,
The mat-mender squatting near wearily braids his string,

And curses at the thunder-flies that blacken on his arm
(As now they irk and terrify the gangers on the farm),
And thinks once again when he charged across the sand
In such torment, his reward—a hook for a hand,

And yet he labours on, till one o'clock drones,
Muttering how the flies make the flesh creep on his
bones—
Then hobbles for his beer, and lively by and bye
Talks forgotten battles with a tear in his eye

Evening Mystery

Now ragged clouds in the west are heaping,
All the hedges fall a-weeping,
And in a thin green distance flowers
The moon, the blossom of lonely hours

The moon she lightens on a myriad meadows
And her rays wander among wood shadows,
Ere the last of sunset's flown
She has made a new world of her own

Old farm-houses with their white faces
Fly, and their ghosts have taken their places,
Even the signposts like grim liars
Point to losing briakes and briars

Tired birds roosting are not yet sleeping,
But stir and mutter at the wild eyes peeping,
And sheep will not let silence lie,
But blare about the hilltop sky

As though long-plotting dogs had broken
From kennel-chains, by the ringleader spoken,
To harry the ewes in the light of the moon—
The blood on their jaws will hang 'em anon.

But no, for miles the sheepfolds moan,
And dogs bay from their farms alone,
Can she who shines so calm be fear?
What poison pours she in slumber's ear?

Sheet Lightning

When on the green the rag-tag game had stopt
And red the lights through alehouse curtains glowed,
The clambering brake drove out and took the road.
Then on the stern moors all the babble dropt
Among those merry men, who felt the dew
Sweet to the soul and saw the southern blue
Thronged with heat lightning miles and miles abroad,
Working and whickering, snakish, winged and clawed,
Or like old carp lazily rising and shouldering.
Long the slate cloud flank shook with the death-white
smouldering
Yet not a voice
The night drooped oven-hot,
Then where the turnpike pierced the black wood plot,
Tongues wagged again and each man felt the grim
Destiny of the hour speaking through him,
And then tales came of dwarfs on Starling Hill
And those young swimmers drowned at the roller mill,
Where on the drowsiest noon the undertow
Famishing for life boiled like a pot below

And how two higglers at the Walnut Tree
Had curst the Lord in thunderstorm and He
Had struck them dead as soot with lightning then—
It left the tankards whole, it chose the men.
Many a lad and many a lass was named
Who once stept bold and proud, but death had tamed
Their revel on the eve of May, cut short
The primrosing and promise of good sport,
Shut up the score book, laid the ribbands bye

Such bodings mustered from the fevered sky,
But now the spring well through the honeycomb
Of scored stone rumbling tokened them near home,
The whip lash clacked, the jog-trot sharpened, all
Sang Farmer's Boy as loud as they could bawl,
And at the Walnut Tree the homeward brake
Stopt for hoarse ribaldry to brag and slake

The weary wildfire faded from the dark,
While this one damned the parson, that the cleik,
And anger's balefire forked from the unbared blade
At word of things gone wrong or stakes not paid:

While Joe the driver stooped with oath to find
A young jack rabbit in the roadway, blind
Or dazzled by the lamps, as stiff as steel
With fear Joe beat its brain out on the wheel.

Will o' the Wisp

FROM choked morass I leap and run
As free as heaven's stars or sun
And when the fisher gets him home
About his lair I nimbly roam,
Unthreatened by his envious eye
That wishes water folk to die,
And then like darting dace I go
Soaring, swerving high and low

The wind though scarce a ghostly stir
Bears my small torch that men aver
Is but a vapour's fevered sheen
Or lanterned fly like him in green
Whose light now glistens on the road
As mewling cat-owls wheel abroad,
But those who've seen me, make reply
'Nor marish-breath nor lanterned fly'

And this my revel I will make
Though churls and fools rush in my wake
And like a thistle's down would seize
A God that takes his evening ease!
So Hodge and Ha'pence lured askance
See me past further sagbeds dance
And squashing where the black streams crawl
Are left with working mire to brawl

On ashy clouds if I've a mind
I hover over human kind
And loose my summer lightnings till
The very drunkard's tongue is still,
I, with the bright-haired comets kin,
Baited for a harlequin,
I, spirit fire that none can quell,
Content in swamps despised to dwell!

Cloudy June

Above the hedge the spearman thistle towers
And thinks himself the god of all he sees,
But nettles jostle fearless where he glowers,
Like old and stained and sullen tapestries,
And elbowing hemlocks almost turn to trees,
Proud as the sweetbriar with her bubble flowers,
Where puft green spider cowers
To trap the toiling bees

Here joy shall muse what melancholy tells,
And melancholy smile because of joy,
Whether the poppy breathe arabian spells
To make them friends, or whistling gipsy-boy
Sound them a truce that nothing comes to cloy
No sunray burns through this slow cloud, nor swells
Noise save the browsing-bells,
Half sorrow and half joy.

Night comes, from fens where blind grey castles frown
A veiled moon ventures on the cavernous sky
No stir, no tassel-tremble on the down
Mood dims to nothing atom-like I lie
Where nightjars burr and yapping fox steps by
And hedgehogs wheeze and play in glimmering brown,
And my swooned passions drown,
Nor tell me I am I

Mole Catcher

With coat like any mole's, as soft and black,
And hazel bows bundled beneath his arm,
And long-helved spade and rush bag on his back
The trapper plods alone about the farm
And spies new mounds in the ripe pasture-land,
And where the lob-worms writhe up in alarm
And easy sinks the spade, he takes his stand
Knowing the moles' dark highroad runs below
Then sharp and square he chops the turf, and day
Gloats on the opened turnpike through the clay

Out from his wallet hurry pin and prong,
And trap, and noose to tie it to the bow,
And then his grand arcanum, oily and strong,
Found out by his forefather years ago
To scent the peg and witch the moles along.
The bow is earthed and arched ready to shoot

And snatch the death-knot fast round the first mole
Who comes and snuffs well pleased and tries to root
Past the sly nose peg , back again is put
The mould, and death left smirking in the hole.
The old man goes and tallies all his snares
And finds the prisoners there and takes his toll

And moles to him are only moles , but hares
See him afield and scarcely cease to nip
Their dinners, for he harms not them , he spares
The drowning fly that of his ale would sip
And throws the ant the crumbs of comradeship
And every time he comes into his yard
Grey linnet knows he brings the groundsel sheaf
And clatters round the cage to be unbarred
And on his finger whistles twice as hard —
What his old vicar says, is his belief,
In the side pew he sits and hears the truth
And never misses once to ring his bell
On Sundays night and morn, nor once since youth
Has heard the chimes afield, but has heard tell
There's not a peal in England sounds so well

Water Sport

'Come, all who hear our song' say Yalding bells,
And dim 'We bid you come' ring Hunton's four,
Then, 'Come, come, come,' the dingling treble tells,
And still the echo drones a moment more
The sunny music travelling out like bees
Was pleasant on the water's wide blue glade,
Where Cheveney mill peers through the poplar trees—
Sweet fell the summons there, but none obeyed

Loosed from the harness of the grumbling mill,
Hungry for play, peal churchbells as they will,
The mill boy and his boon companions urge
Their crazy boat out from the bubbling verge
And up the broad flood, gabbling as they row,
They venture proud as Vikings long ago,
Where the red butterfly with sleights and whims
Mocks the stretched hand, and where the swallow skims
To gild his wing with floss of twinkling dew
And in the hawthorn whence the young thrush flew
The chuff vole feeds, a very alderman,
Though, scared below, that old leviathan
The pike shoots into surer solitude

Pleasure is there in that old boat and rude,
And will be there, as long as the green planks
Hold each to each · as long as Sunday pranks
Startle the redhead moorhen into shelter

Or on the sleeping hatch the black weeds swelter
Glorious will be the long adventurous day,
And sweet will vespers be, to hush their play,
When the slow ripples from the home course run
For seeming miles on miles to the dying Sun,
The dying Sun that even through the black
Sharp-jutting mill will burn with intense light,
Joy will fall deeper with the dews of night
And the new moon marred with no wraith or wrack
Shine like an angel to the mill boy's sight

The Scythe Struck by Lightning

A THICK hot haze had choked the valley grounds
Long since, the dogday sun had gone his rounds
Like a dull coal half lit with sulky heat,
And leas were iron, ponds were clay, fierce beat
The blackening flies round moody cattle's eyes
Wasps on the mudbanks seemed a hornet's size
That on the dead roach battened The plough's increase
Stood under a curse

Behold, the far release!
Old wisdom breathless at her cottage door
'Sounds of abundance' mused, and heard the roar
Of marshalled armies in the silent air,
And thought Elisha stood beside her there,

And clacking reckoned ere the next nightfall
She'd turn the looking-glasses to the wall

Faster than armies out of the burnt void
The hourglass clouds innumerably deployed,
And when the hay-folks next look up, the sky
Sags black above them, scarce is time to fly
And most run for their cottages, but Ward,
The mower, for the inn beside the ford,
And slow strides he with shouldered scythe still bare,
While to the coverts leaps the great-eyed hare

As he came in the dust snatched up and whirled
Hung high, and like a bell-rope whipped and twirled;
The brazen light glared round, the haze resolved
Into demoniac shapes bulged and convolved
Well might poor ewes afar make bleatings wild,
Though this old trusting mower sat and smiled,
For from the hush of many days the land
Had waked itself and now on every hand
Shrill swift alarm-notes, cries and counter-cries,
Lowings and crowings came and throbbing sighs
Now atom lightning brandished on the moor,
Then out of sullen drumming came the roar
Of thunder joining battle east and west
In hedge and orchard small birds durst not rest,
Flittering like dead leaves and like wisps of straws,
And the cuckoo called again, for without pause
Oncoming voices in the vortex burred
The storm came toppling like a wave, and blurred

In grey the trees that like black steeples towered
The sun's last yellow died Then who but cowered ?
Down ruddying darkness floods the hideous flash,
And pole to pole the cataract whirlwinds clash

Alone within the tavern parlour still
Sat the grey mower, pondering his God's will,
And flinching not to flame or bolt, that swooped
With a great hissing rain till terror drooped
In weariness and then there came a roar
Ten-thousand-fold, he saw not, was no more—
But life bursts on him once again, and blood
Beats droning round, and light comes in a flood

He stares and sees the sashes battered awry,
The wainscot shivered, the crocks shattered, and nigh,
His twisted scythe, melted by its fierce foe,
Whose Parthian shot struck down the chimney Slow
Old Ward lays hand to his old working-friend,
And thanking God Whose mercy did defend
His servant, yet must drop a tear or two
And think of times when that old scythe was new,
And stands in silent grief, nor hears the voices
Of many a bird that through the land rejoices,
Nor sees through the smashed panes the seagreen sky,
That ripens into blue, nor knows the storm is by

The Giant Puffball

From what star I know not, but I found
Myself newborn below the coppice rail,
No bigger than the dewdrops and as round,
In a soft sward, no cattle might assail

And so I gathered mightiness and grew
With this one dream kindling in me, that I
Should never cease from conquering light and dew
Till my white splendour touched the trembling sky.

A century of blue and stilly light
Bowed down before me, the dew came agen,
The moon my sibyl worshipped through the night,
The sun returned and long abode but then

Hoarse drooping darkness hung me with a shroud
And switched at me with shrivelled leaves in scorn.
Red morning stole beneath a grinning cloud,
And suddenly clambering over dike and thorn

A half-moon host of churls with flags and sticks
Hallooed and hurtled up the partridge brood,
And Death clapped hands from all the echoing thicks,
And trampling envy spied me where I stood,

Who haled me tired and quaking, hid me by,
And came agen after an age of cold,
And hung me in the prison-house adry
From the great crossbeam Here defiled and old

I perish through unnumbered hours, I swoon,
Hacked with harsh knives to staunch a child's torn hand,
And all my hopes must with my body soon
Be but as crouching dust and wind-blown sand

First Snow

By the red chimney-pots the pigeons cower,
With heads tucked in, to find what warmth they may,
Swift the white motes are come in a glistening shower,
And the blue brightness that unsealed the day
Is lost in wreathing grey

Half hoping, and half doubting, small birds come
And whistle on the taloned boughs, where still
Pale apples swing, like masks that in old Rome
The gardeners hung to warn each pilfering bill:
But here worse gods shall kill

The shower convolves and drives all the trees' arms
Are whitened over till small birds well know
What fate has bidden Faint from lonely farms
Guns speak like echoes of the croaking crow
How silent comes the snow

Now what shall warm the frost-burnt grape that clings
To the green sapless vine ? Poor budding rose
And lavender's late blossom, get you wings
To flee the death that in the winnow goes.
Mute the cloaked village grows ,

Not a bird pipes , nor cockerel calls the tune,
Who underneath the ivied paling passes
With all his hens The church clock drones the noon ,
In the brown gaping grave the snow amasses,
The thin wind shakes the grasses

To-day they bear the priest unto his rest
Among his own, where he so long had willed.
There he shall lie, time's winter in his breast,
There the harsh tongue of malice shall be stilled,
There toil's reward fulfilled

If only through the snow and stomped mould he
Might hear the bells or horses' brasses ring,
The lads at football still, the children's glee
At slide , the rooks, the baaing lambs in spring,
Even his enemies sing !

Village Green

THE thatched roofs green with moss and grass stand
round,
And earthy walls seem growing from the ground,
Bold pipe the missel-bird and bluecap gay
From white-bloomed plum, nor fear the yokels' play;
Who on the wet green whirl the ball about
With monstrous shambling kicks, and in and out
Among them plays the mongrel black and young
As pleased as any there, and lolls his tongue
But near the postman watching 'how she flies'
The older dog looks on with pitying eyes,
And thinks it only folly play, and droops
His weary head away when laughter whoops
To see tripped longshanks floundering on his back
With trousers daubed in mire and face all black.

The Poor Man's Pig

ALREADY fallen plum-bloom stars the green
And apple-boughs as knarred as old toads' backs
Wear their small roses ere a rose is seen,
The building thrush watches old Job who stacks
The bright-peeled osiers on the sunny fence,
The pent sow grunts to hear him stumping by,
And tries to push the bolt and scamper thence,
But her ringed snout still keeps her to the sty.

Then out he lets her run, away she snorts
In bundling gallop for the cottage door,
With hungry hubbub begging crusts and orts,
Then like the whirlwind bumping round once more;
Nuzzling the dog, making the pullets run,
And sulky as a child when her play's done

The Covert

I ALWAYS thought to find my love
In some grove's ancient lair
Where though all day my steps might rove
No one beside would fare

Among the small forgotten woods
With clambering ivy laden,
By ridings lost in bramble hoods
I haunted for my maiden

The greenest places I could find,
Where underwoods are free
To flourish like the taller kind,
Seemed homes where she might be.

And nothing but the loitering brook
Or bee with question rude
Notice of my intrusion took
Or felt my solitude.

The brook's eye mirrored me and seemed
With my own thoughts to shine,
The bee patrolling where I dreamed
Grumbled for countersign

'And are not maidens fair to see
In every green and town?
Why go you wooing secretly
Through paths none travel down?

Why stare you on the sunny grove
Like pale ghosts on moonlight?
But madness there will find a love
And then be shut from sight'

Daphne from Phœbus fled of old
And grew into a tree,
And all the loves of heaven, I hold,
On earth now prisoned be

And it may be, from earth or air,
My longing shall unsphere
Beauty that only Daphnes wear,
And so I tarry here—

Is there no spell upon this gloom
So radiant, cool and green,
As promises the sudden bloom
Of the loveliest ever seen?

There stooping to the hunching wall
I'll stare into the rush of stars
Or bubbles that the waterfall
Brings forth and breaks in ceaseless wars.

The shelving hills have made a fourm
Where the mill holdings shelter warm,
And here I came with one I loved
To watch the seething millions swarm
But long ago she grew a ghost
Though walking with me every day,
Even when her beauty burned me most
She to a spectre dimmed away—

Until though cheeks all morning-bright
And black eyes gleaming life's delight
And singing voice dwelt in my sense,
Herself paled on my inward sight
She grew one whom deep waters glassed.
Then in dismay I hid from her,
And lone by talking brooks at last
I found a Love still lovelier

O lost in tortured days of France!
Yet still the moment comes like chance
Born in the stirring midnight's sigh
Or in the wild wet sunset's glance
And how I know not but this stream
Still sounds like vision's voice, and still
I watch with Love the bubbles gleam,
I walk with Love beside the mill

The heavens are thralled with cloud, yet grey,
Half-moonlight swims the field till day,
 The stubbled fields, the bleaching woods,
Even this bleak hour was stolen away,
By this shy water falling low
 And calling low the whole night through
And calling back the long ago
 And richest world I ever knew

The hop-kiln fingers cobweb-white
With discord dim turned left and right,
 And when the wind was south and small
The sea's far whisper drowsed the night,
Scarce more than mantling ivy's voice
 That in the tumbling water trailed
Love's spirit called me to rejoice
 When she to nothingness had paled

For Love the daffodils shone here
In grass the greenest of the year,
 Daffodils seemed the sunset lights
And silver birches budded clear.
And all from east to west there strode
 Great shafted clouds in argent air,
The shining chariot-wheels of God,
 And still Love's moment sees them there.

The Forest

AMONG the golden groves when June walketh there
I go to find old loves in the haunted air,
And with the humble bee down the ancient rides
I pause whene'er I see where my honey hides

But scarcely do I heed the small welcome moss
Or time's secrets read or pore on pit and fosse,
Or kindle at blooms I knew not before,
Though twayblade haunt the glooms and strange
hellebore

The pheasant crows anear, I lift not my head,
Wildcats race in fear—as well flee the dead!
Oaks breathe and pines sigh, and all for praise,
And yet my soul divines little that each says

But the whole wood moves again and again
Memory of old loves, perfect joy of pain,
Without words I've found the hid world at last
In the woods deep drowned, after so long past

Not my first delight, the sweet Kentish girl,
Once ever in my sight, but O! gone in the whirl
Of time's broken stream, till I cannot guess
Her smile or primrose gleam of new loveliness

Not my childhood's bliss, in greenwoods to go
Where great snakes might hiss, so high reeds did grow,
And from early day till eve trembling crept,
Pioneers to stray where the black ponds slept

But the rich hours chance gave, where droughthy with
war
I left him to rave on his ridges not far,
And lay in a green shade of Aveluy Wood
And with those hours allayed the fever in the blood,

Not a leaf regarding, but one with the wood's soul,
All my thoughts discarding—refreshed thence and
whole
I went to live or die, and five years are flown,
But not till now was I with the woods again alone

Behind The Line

Treasure not so the forloin days
When dun clouds flooded the naked plains
With foul remorseless rains,
Tread not those memory ways
Where by the dripping alien farms,
Starved orchards with their shrivelled arms,
The bitter mouldering wind would whine
At the brisk mules clattering towards the Line.

Remember not with so sharp skill
Each chasm in the clouds that with strange fire
 Lit pyramid-fosse and spire
 Miles on miles from our hill,
In the magic glass, aye, then their lure
Like heaven's houses gleaming pure
Might soothe the long-imprisoned sight
And put the seething storm to flight

Enact not you so like a wheel
The round of evenings in sandbagged rooms
 Where candles flicked the glooms,
 The jests old time could steal
From ugly destiny, on whose brink
The poor fools grappled fear with drink,
And snubbed the hungry raving guns
With endless tunes on gramophones

About you spreads the world anew,
The old fields all for your sense rejoice,
 Music has found her ancient voice,
 From the hills there's heaven on earth to view,
And kindly Mirth will raise his glass
To bid with you dull Care go pass—
And still you wander muttering on
Over the shades of shadows gone

The Avenue

Up the long colonnade I press, and strive
By love to thank God that I go alive
And the night dark as palls of cloud can prove
Bids me seek beauty, while wetshod I move,
In the scarce-glimmering boles and flying boughs
That run up black and naked to Heaven's brows
And are as still as life could ever be

Thus think I trudging on to know each tree,
This leaning out of line, that with great rings,
Aye, ruffs of gnarled grain, whence the forked top springs,
That with its crow's nest, one whose boughs stoop down
Like roots into the sward below, one's crown
Struck by the lightning, whence it stands alone
Stark staring mad but dead, its own tombstone

And still trees, trees; long lies the journey through,
Till the thought runs like rebel dogs askew,
And soon one tree is like the rest a tree,
If stunt or sturdy, all are one to me
While men ahead, behind and left and right,
Tramp over the greasy cobbles through midnight,
Between great monolith trees, and often throw
Their strapped packs up to ease them, as they go
Half in a sleep, brain-cramped, dead though they live;
And those who speak find but few words to give.

Drenchingly dripped the trees, the blown sleet came
These trees were jagged with worse than lightning's
flame,
These fields were gouged with worse than ploughs, a
moan
Worse than the wind's with every wind went on.
The rattling limbers hurrying past would jar
The jangled nerves, and candles' chancing gleam
From sweating cellars looked sweet peace as far
As any star and wilder than a dream,
To him who soon would be beyond the wire
Listening his wits to ague in the mire,
And waiting till the drumfire hours began,
In the fool's triumph of the soul of man.
Beneath those lights whose fountain-play would shine
On quiet hamlets miles behind the line,
That in our respite we had watched ascend,
And poise their drooped heads scouring end to end
The grey front lines, and plucking at death's sleeve
They showed him in the nick new skulls to cleave,
Yet never once lit up our destiny,
But moped and mowed in dizzy secrecy

Now on the sky I see the dull lights burn
Of that small village whither I return
The trees hide backward in the mists, the men
Are lying in their thankless graves agen,
And I a stranger in my home pass by
To seek and serve the beauty that must die.

Reunion in War

THE windmill in his smock of white
 Stared from his little crest,
Like a slow smoke was the moonlight
 As I went like one possessed

Where the glebe path makes shortest way ;
 The stammering wicket swung
I passed amid the crosses grey
 Where opiate yew-boughs hung

The bleached grass shuddered into sighs,
 The dogs that knew this moon
Far up were harrying sheep, the cries
 Of hunting owls went on

And I among the dead made haste
 And over flat vault stones
Set in the path unheeding paced
 Nor thought of those chill bones

Thus to my sweetheart's cottage I,
 Who long had been away,
Turned as the traveller turns adry
 To brooks to moist his clay.

Her cottage stood like a dream, so clear
And yet so dark, and now
I thought to find my more than dear
And if she'd kept her vow

Old house dog from his barrel came
Without a voice, and knew
And licked my hand, all seemed the same
To the moonlight and the dew

By the white damson then I took
The tallest osier wand
And thrice upon her casement strook,
And she, so fair, so fond,

Looked out, and saw in wild delight
And tiptoed down to me,
And cried in silent joy that night
Beside the bullace tree

O cruel time to take away,
And worse to bring agen,
Why slept not I in Flanders clay
With all the murdered men?

For I had changed, or she had changed,
Though true loves both had been,
Even while we kissed we stood estranged
With the ghosts of war between.

We had not met but a moment ere
War baffled joy, and cried,
" Love's but a madness, a burnt flare,
The shell's a madman's bride "

. . .

The cottage stood, poor stone and wood,
Poorer than stone stood I,
Then from her kind arms moved in a mood
As grey as the cereclothed sky

The roosts were stirred, each little bird
Called fearfully out for day,
The church clock with his dead voice whirred
As if he bade me stay

To trace with madman's fingers all
The letters on the stones
Where thick beneath the twitch roots crawl
In dead men's envied bones.

A Farm near Zillebeke

Black clouds hide the moon, the amazement is gone,
The morning will come in weeping and rain,
The Line is all hushed—on a sudden anon
The fool bullets clack and guns mouth again.
I stood in the yard of a house that must die,
And still the black hame was stacked by the door,
And harness still hung there, and the dray waited by

Black clouds hid the moon, tears blinded me more.

Festubert, 1916

Tired with dull grief, grown old before my day,
I sit in solitude and only hear
Long silent laughters, murmurings of dismay,
The lost intensities of hope and fear,
In those old marshes yet the rifles lie,
On the thin breastwork flutter the grey rags,
The very books I read are there—and I
Dead as the men I loved, wait while life drags

Its wounded length from those sad streets of war
Into green places here, that were my own,
But now what once was mine is mine no more,
I look for such friends here and I find none.

With such strong gentleness and tireless will
Those ruined houses seared themselves in me,
Passionate I look for their dumb story still,
And the charred stub outspeaks the living tree.

I rise up at the singing of a bird
And scarcely knowing slink along the lane,
I dare not give a soul a look or word
For all have homes and none's at home in vain:
Deep red the rose burned in the grim redoubt,
The self-sown wheat around was like a flood,
In the hot path the lizard lolled time out,
The saints in broken shrines were bright as blood.

Sweet Mary's shrine between the sycamores!
There we would go, my friend of friends and I,
And snatch long moments from the grudging wars,
Whose dark made light intense to see them by . . .
Shrewd bit the morning fog, the whining shots
Spun from the wrangling wire, then in warm swoon
The sun hushed all but the cool orchard plots,
We crept in the tall grass and slept till noon.

The Troubled Spirit

Said God, Go, spirit, thou hast served me well
In these our palaces, and choose out one star
Of all the universe beneath us lies,
And see what other beauty I have made
So spoke the Almighty, in whose eyes there burned
A dimmer light, and whose bowed head revealed
Some weariness while Time smiled to himself

Now takes the spirit thought, whether to search
The rosy fires of suns innumerable
That seem not to have rest even for a spirit,
Or to some tinier satellite to fly
And kindlier radiance beckoning.
Thus comes he
To earth, and sees the restless water curve
Round lands wherefrom a rumour smokes, scarce loud
As the voices of the waters, and there seems
In these lands but a quiet interchange
Of music, jarred, yet nigh to full concent
So comes the spirit.
And now, passing among
The moving multitudes, he sees how most
Are strong and lusty in their generation,
And though their countenance to their fellows yield
Small comfort, yet the most seem in themselves
To find all that this world might ever give

The ringing cities shine in the morning light
And in the evening glitter unafraid,
The beasts are droved to furnish their proud tables.
The deeps yield up their mystery for their need

Over the green fields, over the silver waters
Goes the good spirit, and earth's willing plenty
Warms him to rapture, while the zeal and power
Of busy man, thinks he, is the bright flower
Of all besides nay even the songs of heaven
Scarce seem so brave, and though death takes his toll,
The strong still flourish, and the grief's soon past

But now the poursuivant, making swift way,
Happy as swallows in the blue calm air,
While the rich harvest glows and the hives rejoice,
Espies a wilderness where little's green,
And the land clawed as by great dragon's pounces
Yet dumb, dun, mournful lieth by itself,
With wounds ten thousand times ten thousand writhed

Over this golgotha poising like a kestrel
He stares, he wonders—here the very quiet
Is a vast hubbub, here the sun's uprising
Is the annihilation of night's mercy,
The fallen jaw grins, the eyes are glazed with foulness.
O Spirit, fly thy swiftest !

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Pondering deep
He leaves the brown waste far away, he comes
To a white village peeping through its elms
There he stoops down and in a coppice rests

The twilight now bids timid hares come forth
And play like children in the woodside corn,
And youth flings by, and age as bold though slow
But one there trembling comes where rests the spirit,
And stands half silent, as for very shame
To himself muttering Yet the spirit looks
And sees his eyes as eyes set earnestly
On some one listening and of one mind with him

Where the soul's uttered, though the words be halt,
They are a language understood in heaven,
And thus the spirit, now first listening close,
Hears not unwitting
'Like a ghost am I,
Having no part in common day or joy,
Young, and yet older than the oldest men
There's none to understand though some may love.
Nay, those might understand would shun to open
Their heart, but bind old memories as with chains

Has summer come? and has she passed her noon?
How once I told myself of summer coming
When I'd amaze myself with every minute
From the first thrill of day till midnight hawks
Laughed bedlam down the hedge—if I should live

To see those magic summers And I live,
But now the moss upon the churchyard stone
Has felt the radiance with a joy not mine,
And summer seems a rumour in the past

So high flamed life when death was gesturing by,
So faint burns now A day of that gone age
Was more than all the days that now shall come.
Then friendship was, that mightier grew than love
Why are you fallen, friend after friend ? for these
Lie now lapt in their silence and the clay
Whose stubborn hatred they so often fought,
And these are scattered listless and estranged
All climbed the summits of the immense, all learned
The secrets of the tempest and the dawn,
In Zara desert now all bleach or crawl

But come you, friends, let necromantic thought
Be our reunion, find we our old selves
And our old haunts, half-stricken towns that dare
Keep mirth alive, old cellars and rare sleep,
Lines where glad poppies burn or pollards stalk,
And terror broods not greater than we can bear,
Sleep's double sweet, wit twice as precious there.
And there joy triumphs, from such danger snatcht,
And there we'll sit and make our sad selves merry,
Nor reckon up to-morrow and its fate,
Enjoy the franchise of wild-running nature,
Nor prophesy to-morrow's maniac battle
Fine merry franions——'

Tears no words can tell
Fall now, the spirit goes abroad attuned
To this wild mood, and hears it from all sides,
And musing with a dimness on his brow
The wreck of earth, the soul's worse solitude,
Returns to heaven, is stationed by the throne,
And now first sees how the bowed head reveals
Some weariness, while Time smiles to himself.

The Late Stand-to

I THOUGHT of cottages nigh brooks
Whose aspens loved to shine and swirl,
And chubby babies' wondering looks
Above the doorboards, and the girl
Who blossomed like the morning sky,
With clear light like a lily made,
She dipt her bucket and went by,
Where bright the unwithering water played

No water ever ran so blithe
As that same mill-tail stream, I'd say,
And life as laughing danced as lithe
And twinkled on as many a day
The wonder seemed that summer waned,
So full it filled the giant sphere,
But skulls chill on where warm blood reigned
And even such summers must grow sere.

I heard the bell brag on the west
And whisper on the eastern wind,
And hated how it found the nest
That Time was never meant to find
Through many an afternoon blue-hung
Like sultry smoke with drowsy heat
There came the bell-cote's scheming tongue
Till gipsy-boys that slouched down street

With roach on withy rods impaled
Had flown, and swallows met to fly,
And yellow light and leaves prevailed
And trouble roved the evening sky
But spite of ghosts who shook their hair
In clouds and stalked through darker plains,
Still to the wood bridge I'd repair
Ere autumn palsied into rains

The fish turned over in the shoal,
A flash of summer! then came she,
Who when green leaves were lapping cool
So like a lily dazzled me,
Her basketful of mushrooms got,
She passed, she called me by my name,
And now whole myriads are forgot
But kindly Nell will seem the same

Down to my death! Long tarry, Sun,
That shone upon us two that day,
And autumn's honey breath live on
The last sighed air that leaves me clay!—

Clay! clay! the packing bullets mocked
And split the breastwork by my head,
And into aching senses shocked
I gave Stand-To! the east was red.

War Autobiography

Written in Illness

Heaven is clouded, mists of rain
Stream with idle motion by,
Like a tide the trees' refrain
Wearies me where pale I lie,
Thinking of sunny times that were
Even in shattered Festubert,
Stubborn joys that blossomed on
When the small golden god was gone

Who tiptoe on his spire surveyed
Yser north from Ypres creeping,
And, how many a sunset! made
A longed-for glory amid the weeping
In how many a valley of death
Some trifling thing has given me breath,
And when the bat-like wings brushed by
What steady stars smiled in the sky!

War might make his worst grimace
And still my mind in armour good
Turned aside in every place
And saw bright day through the black wood:
There the lyddite vapoured foul,
But there I got myself a rose,
By the shrapnelled lock I'd prowl
To see below the proud pike doze.

Like the first light ever streamed
New and lively past all telling,
What I dreamed of joy I dreamed,
The more opprest the more rebelling,
Trees ne'er shone so lusty green
As those in Hamel valley, eyes
Did never such right friendship mean
As his who loved my enterprise

Thus the child was born again
In the youth, the toga's care
Flung aside—desired, found vain,
And sharp as ichor grew the air.
But the hours passed and evermore
Harsher screamed the condor war,
The last green tree was scourged to nothing,
The stream's decay left senses loathing,

The eyes that had been strength so long
Gone, or blind, or lapt in clay,
And war grown twenty times as strong
As when I held him first at bay,

Then down and down I sunk from joy
To shrivelled age, though scarce a boy,
And knew for all my fear to die
That I with those lost friends should lie.

Now in slow imprisoned pain
Lie I in the garret bed
With this crampt and weighted brain
That scarce has power to wish me fled
To burst the vault and soar away
Into the apocalypse of day,
And so regain that tingling light
That twice has passed before my sight

Third Ypres

A Reminiscence

Triumph ! how strange, how strong had triumph come
On weary hate of foul and endless war,
When from its grey gravecloths awoke anew
The summer day Among the tumbled wreck
Of fascined lines and mounds the light was peering,
Half-smiling upon us, and our new-found pride,—
The terror of the waiting night outlived,
The time too crowded for the heart to count
All the sharp cost in friends killed on the assault
No sap of all the octopus had held us,
Here stood we trampling down the ancient tyrant
So shouting dug we among the monstrous pits.

Amazing quiet fell upon the waste,
Quiet intolerable, to those who felt
The hurrying batteries beyond the masking hills
For their new parley setting themselves in array
In crafty fourms unmapped
No, these, smiled faith,
Are dumb for the reason of their overthrow
They move not back, they lie among the crews
Twisted and choked, they'll never speak again
Only the copse where once might stand a shrine
Still clacked and suddenly hissed its bullets by

The War would end, the Line was on the move,
And at a bound the impassable was passed
We lay and waited with extravagant joy

Now dulls the day and chills, comes there no word
From those who swept through our new lines to flood
The lines beyond? but little comes, and so
Sure as a runner time himself's accosted
And the slow moments shake their heavy heads,
And croak, 'They're done, they'll none of them get through'
They're done, they've all died on the entanglements,
The wire stood up like an unplashed hedge, and thorned
With giant spikes—and there they've paid the bill

Then comes the black assurance, then the sky's
Mute misery lapses into trickling rain,
That wreathes and swims and soon shuts in our world.

And those distorted guns, that lay past use,
Why—miracles not over!—all a firing,
The rain's no cloak from their sharp eyes And you,
Poor signaller, you I passed by this emplacement,
You whom I warned, poor dare-devil, waving your
flags,
Among this screeching I pass you again and shudder
At the lean green flies upon the red flesh madding
Runner, stand by a second Your message —He's gone,
Falls on a knee, and his right hand uplifted
Claws his last message from his ghostly enemy,
Turns stone-like Well I liked him, that young runner,
But there's no time for that O now for the word
To order us flash from these drowning roaring traps
And even hurl upon that snarling wire?
Why are our guns so impotent?

The grey rain,
Steady as the sand in an hourglass on this day,
Where through the window the red lilac looks
And all's so still, the chair's odd click is noise,—
The rain is all heaven's answer, and with hearts
Past reckoning we are carried into night,
And even sleep is nodding here and there

The second night steals through the shrouding rain,
We in our numb thought crouching long have lost
The mockery triumph, and in every runner
Have urged the mind's eye see the triumph to come,

The sweet relief, the straggling out of hell
Into whatever burrows may be given
For life's recall Then the fierce destiny speaks.
This was the calm, we shall look back for this
The hour is come, come, move to the relief!
Dizzy we pass the mule-strewn track where once
The ploughman whistled as he loosed his team,
And where he turned home-hungry on the road
The leaning pollard marks us hungrier turning
We crawl to save the remnant who have torn
Back from the tentacled wire, those whom no shell
Has charred into black carcasses—Relief!
They grate their teeth until we take their room,
And through the churn of moonless night and mud
And flaming burst and sour gas we are huddled
Into the ditches where they bawl sense awake
And in a frenzy that none could reason calm
(Whimpering some, and calling on the dead)
They turn away, as in a dream they find
Strength in their feet to bear back that strange
whim
Their body

At the noon of the dreadful day
Our trench and death's is on a sudden stormed
With huge and shattering salvoes, the clay dances
In founts of clods around the concrete sties
Where still the brain devises some last armour
To live out the poor limbs

This wrath's oncoming
Found four of us together in a pillbox,
Skirting the abyss of madness with light phrases,
White and blinking, in false smiles grimacing
The demon grins to see the game, a moment
Passes, and—still the drum-tap dongs my brain
To a whirring void—through the great breach above me
The light comes in with icy shock and the rain
Horridly drips Doctor, talk, talk! if dead
Or stunned I know not; the stinking powdered concrete,
The lyddite turns me sick—my hair's all full
Of this smashed concrete O I'll drag you, friends,
Out of the sepulchre into the light of day
For this is day, the pure and sacred day
And while I squeak and gibber over you,
Out of the wreck a score of field-mice nimble,
And tame and curious look about them (These
Calmed me, on these depended my salvation)

There comes my serjeant, and by all the powers
The wire is holding to the right battalion
And I can speak—but I myself first spoken
Hear a known voice now measured even to madness
Call me by name 'for God's sake send and help us,
Here in a gunpit, all headquarters done for,
Forty or more, the nine-inch came right through
All splashed with arms and legs, and I myself
The only one not killed, not even wounded

You'll send—God bless you' The more monstrous
fate
Shadows our own, the mind droops doubly burdened,
Nay all for miles our anguish groans and bleeds,
A whole sweet countryside amuck with murder,
Each moment puffed into a year with death

Still wept the rain, roared guns,
Still swooped into the swamps of flesh and blood
All to the drabness of uncreation sunk,
And all thought dwindled to a moan,—Relieve!
But who with what command can now relieve
The dead men from that chaos, or my soul?

'The Earth hath Bubbles'

Come they no more, those ecstasies of earth,
To make men tales for winter's hearth?
Hath the stern spirit wearied of his dreams,
Sleeps he too deep for passion's gleams?
Yet still the moon can move unfathomed tears,
Even in the noonday field walk lonely fears

The owl, the fox cry chilling in the night,
A thousand voices turn cheeks white,
Long sighings run abroad when winds all sleep,
Bodies through bursting hedges leap·
And if we chance awhile to lose our hold
On certainty, the morning finds us bold.

Who saw the sphinx ? 'twas you ! along the street
You heard the beat of padded feet,
You ran with curded blood, but past it sped,
Leapt the high wall, showed its man's head !
Four-footed, lowering at the moon in wane—
That now you call a sickness of your brain !

We've lain abed and felt the whole house quake
To a blow, dogs barked not who should break
The gotch on its nail, the vase on the sill ? or why
Should all tradition seem a lie ?
Or by what frenzy of their fiend prince were
The earth's hobgoblins banished their old sphere ?

Death of Childhood Beliefs

THERE the puddled lonely lane,
Lost among the red swamp sallows,
Gleams through drifts of summer rain
Down to ford the sandy shallows,
Where the dewberry brambles crane

And the stream in cloven clay
Round the bridging sheep-gate stutters,
Wind-spun leaves burn silver-grey,
Far and wide the blue moth flutters
Over swathes of warm new hay

Scrambling boys with mad to-do
 Paddle in the sedges' hem,
Ever finding joy anew,
 Clocks toll time out—not for them,
With what years to frolic through!

How shall I return and how
 Look once more on those old places!
For Time's cloud is on me now
 That each day, each hour effaces
Visions once on every bough

Stones could talk together then,
 Jewels lay for hoes to find,
Each oak hid King Charles agen,
 Ay, nations in his powdered rind,
Sorcery lived with homeless men

Spider Dick, with cat's green eyes
 That could pierce stone walls, has flitted—
By some hedge he shakes and cries,
 A lost man, half-starved, half-witted,
Whom the very stoats despise

Trees on hill-tops then were Palms,
 Closing pilgrims' arbours in,
David walked there singing Psalms,
 Out of the clouds white seraphin
 Leaned to watch us fill our bin

Where's the woodman now to tell
 Will o' the Whisp's odd fiery anger ?
Where's the ghost to toll the bell
 Startling midnight with its clangour
Till the wind seemed but a knell ?

Drummers jumping from the tombs
 Banged and thumped all through the town,
Past shut shops and silent rooms
 While the flaming spires fell down ,—
Now but dreary thunder booms.

Smuggler trapped in headlong spate,
 Smuggler's mare with choking whinney
Well I knew your fame, your fate ,
 By the ford and shaking spinney
Where you perished I would wait,

Half in glory, half in fear,
 While the fierce flood, trough and crest,
Whirled away the shepherd's gear,
 And sunset wildfire coursed the west,
Crying Armageddon near

The Canal

WHERE so dark and still
Slept the water, never changing,
From the glad sport in the meadows
 Oft I turned me

Fear would strike me chill
On the clearest day in summer,
Yet I loved to stand and ponder
Hours together

By the tarred bridge rail—
There the lockman's vine-clad window,
Mirrored in the tomb-like water,
Stared in silence

Till, deformed and pale
In the sunken cavern shadows,
One by one imagined demons
Scowled upon me.

Barges passed me by,
With their unknown surly masters
And small cabins, whereon some rude
Hand had painted

Trees and castles high
Cheerly stepped the towing horses,
And the women sung their children
Into slumber

Barges, too, I saw
Drowned in mud, drowned, drowned long ages,
Their grey ribs but seen in summer,
Their names never.

In whose silted maw
Swarmed great eels, the priests of darkness,
Old as they, who came at midnight
To destroy me.

Like one blind and lame
Who by some new sense has vision
And strikes deadlier than the strongest
Went this water

Many an angler came,
Went his ways, and I would know them,
Some would smile and give me greeting,
Some kept silence—

Most, one old dragoon
Who had never a morning hallo,
But with stony eye strode onward
Till the water,

On a silent noon,
That had watched him long, commanded
Whom he answered, leaping headlong
To self-murder

'Fear and fly the spell,'
Thus my Spirit sang beside me,
Then once more I ranged the meadows,
Yet still brooded,

When the threefold knell
Sounded through the haze of harvest—
Who had found the lame blind water
Swift and seeing ?

The Time is Gone

THE time is gone when we could throw
Our angle in the sleepy stream,
And nothing more desired to know
Than was it roach or was it bream ?
Sitting there in such a mute delight,
The kingfisher would come and on the rods alight.

Or hurrying through the dewy hay
Without a thought but to make haste
We came to where the old ring lay
And bats and balls seemed heaven at least
With our laughing and our giant strokes
The echoes clacked among the chestnuts and the oaks

When the spring came up we got
And out among old Ammet Hills
Blossoms, aye and pleasures sought
And found ! bloom withers, pleasure chills,
Then geographers along wild brooks
We named the tumbling-bays and creeks and horseshoe
crooks

But one day I found a man
 Leaning on the bridge's rail,
Dared his face as all to scan,
 And awestruck wondered what could ail
An elder, blest with all the gifts of years,
In such a happy place to shed such bitter tears.

April Byeway

Friend whom I never saw, yet dearest friend,
 Be with me travelling on the byeway now
In April's month and mood our steps shall bend
 By the shut smithy with its penthouse brow
 Armed round with many a felly and crackt plough
And we will mark in his white smock the mill
 Standing aloof, long numbed to any wind,
That in his crannies mourns, and craves him still,
 But now there is not any grain to grind,
 And even the master lies too deep for winds to find.

Grieve not at these for there are mills amain
 With lusty sails that leap and drop away
On further knolls, and lads to fetch the grain
 The ash-spit wickets on the green betray
 New games begun and old ones put away
Let us fare on, dead friend, O deathless friend,
 Where under his old hat as green as moss
The hedger chops and finds new gaps to mend,
 And on his bonfires burns the thorns and dross,
 And hums a hymn, the best, thinks he, that ever was

There the grey guinea-fowl stands in the way,
 The young black heifer and the raw-ribbed mare,
And scorn to move for tumbril or for dray
 And feel themselves as good as farmers there.
 From the young corn the prick-eared leverets stare
At strangers come to spy the land—small sirs,
 We bring less danger than the very breeze
Who in great zig-zag blows the bee, and whirs
 In bluebell shadow down the bright green leas,
 From whom in frolic fit the chopt straw darts and
 flees.

The cornel steepling up in white shall know
 The two friends passing by, and poplar smile
All gold within, the church-top fowl shall glow
 To lure us on, and we shall rest awhile
 Where the wild apple blooms above the stile,
The yellow frog beneath blinks up half bold,
 Then scares himself into the deeper green
And thus spring was for you in days of old,
 And thus will be when I too walk unseen
 By one that thinks me friend, the best that there has
 been.

All our lone journey laughs for joy, the hours
 Like honey bees go home in new-found light
Past the cow pond amazed with twinkling flowers
 And antique chalk-pit newly delved to white,
 Or idle snow-plough nearly hid from sight

The blackbird sings us home, on a sudden peers
 The round tower hung with ivy's blackened chains,
Then past the little green the byeway veers,
 The mill-sweeps torn, the forge with cobwebbed
 panes
 That have so many years looked out across the plains

But the old forge and mill are shut and done,
 The tower is crumbling down, stone by stone falls,
An ague doubt comes creeping in the sun,
 The sun himself shudders, the day appals,
 The concourse of a thousand tempests sprawls
Over the blue-lipped lakes and maddening groves,
 Like agonies of gods the clouds are whirled,
The stormwind like the demon huntsman roves—
 Still stands my friend, though all's to chaos hurled,
 The unseen friend, the one last friend in all the
 world

The Child's Grave

I CAME to the churchyard where pretty Joy lies
 On a morning in April, a rare sunny day,
Such bloom rose around, and so many birds' cries,
 That I sang for delight as I followed the way.

I sang for delight in the ripening of spring,
 For dandelions even were suns come to earth,
Not a moment went by but a new lark took wing
 To wait on the season with melody's mirth.

Love-making birds were my mates all the road,
And who would wish surer delight for the eye
Than to see pairing goldfinches gleaming abroad
Or yellowhammers sunning on paling and sty ?

And stocks in the almswomen's garden were blown,
With rich Easter roses each side of the door ,
The lazy white owls in the glade cool and lone
Paid calls on their cousins in the elm's chambered
core

This peace, then, and happiness thronged me around.
Nor could I go burdened with grief, but made merry
Till I came to the gate of that overgrown ground
Where scarce once a year sees the priest come to bury.

Over the mounds stood the nettles in pride,
And, where no fine flowers, there kind weeds dared to
wave ,
It seemed but as yesterday she lay by my side,
And now my dog ate of the grass on her grave

He licked my hand wondering to see me muse so,
And wished I would lead on the journey or home,
As though not a moment of spring were to go
In brooding , but I stood, if her spirit might come

And tell me her life, since we left her that day
In the white lilied coffin, and rained down our tears ,
But the grave held no answer, though long I should
stay ,
How strange that this clay should mingle with hers !

So I called my good dog, and went on my way ,
Joy's spirit shone then in each flower I went by,
And clear as the noon, in coppice and ley,
Her sweet dawning smile and her violet eye !

The Last of Autumn

From cloudy shapes of trees that cluster the hills
The calm blue morning into brightness climbs ,
And joy unhoped-for holds us hushed, and grace
Lures love again to coigns whence the long vales
Lie beautiful , that to my watch-tower come
I haunt an hour, I warm to radiance too,
By oaks that seem to kindle with the dawn
But near his noon the sun sheds dizzy light,
And burning boughs burn with the dawn of death

Shorn empty fields ! where yet the eye discerns
A harvest home , look how the expanses point
To what the crowded season scorned, to stubs
That hold afield their outlaw solitude,
The mandrakes of the farms , see grouping sheep
Dapple the broad pale green, nabbing or resting.
Haystacks and hurdles gleam for honour now
And troughs and hovels in the lonely spaces
Rejected once are headstones in each corner

Now once again the heart that long had feasted
On revel of song and wing, then long had dimmed
Its airy pleasure, cannot let a bird
Chance by but counts him into memory's tribe.
For there the witty jay laughs, here on waves
Invisible ripples the linnet, gross rooks gabble,
Or pheasant in his gaudy coat clangs past.
These are the riches of our poverty,
And all is peopled, though so few are there
When sometimes wells a springing music from
The belt of pines, then the glad moment cries
'The nightingale,' nor that same little bird,
Who now in Abyssinia claps his wings,
Might grieve to own the clear recalling call

Then, senses, quicken, for it is not long—
Though slowly flow the gentle shadows over

Ivy with wasp and hornet buzzes still,
Blue glittering flies are sunning on the stones,
And the hives among the nettles' chalky flowers
Are toiling, welcome, wayside thistles' crown,
And rare-grown daisy in the meadow, shine,
Though your pale cheeks have lost their lovely red.—

But the wind that frets the old and clinging leaves
Arises deep, the very dirge and knell
Of this doomed dream,
And sets the weazel, where she hangs and dries
To skin and bone, still with her whiskered snarl,
A-swaying on the barren sloe-tree's thorn.

For slow and sure comes change, and in the mass
Of time how swift! Look down the glade and know
The timber felled, the vast too-cumbrous branch
Fallen, by the pillar of white that lightning left
The village grandsires knew another glade
This day so seeming-still, so patient-paced
Will drop down precipice darkness to its grave,
The whirlpooled past, the legion roar of night
Rend the tired world and leave it to its winter
Whose turbulent angers and fierce siege shall die
When newness comes to the birth
But who may tell
When spring shall be again? and if these eyes
Should then be shut to the brightness of her coming?
So for her phantom violets I'll not lose
These rich, these poor, these fading glowing lulls
Nor drown my joy in boding Better it were
To be dull Thrift, than squander thus this day
Dull Thrift, who now has sown his mite of land,
Has thrashed his corn and beans, and where the dew's
Quicksilver bubbles lodge and shine all day
In the cabbage leaves, and the last lady-bird
Beats her bright rosy way, leans reckoning coombs
And pence upon his garden palisades.

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